

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01009 040800Z

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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1688

CONFIDENTIAL LUSAKA 1009

FOR AMBASSADOR WILKOWSKI, AF/E -- EYES ONLY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ZA

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL ATTACK ON PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY

1. SEPTEL PROVIDES FULL TEXT OF MOST VIRULENT ZAMBIAN PRESS ATTACK BY FAR ON AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IN OUR MEMORY. JUNE 1 SUNDAY TIMES PAGE ONE "COMMENT" COLUMN CHARACTERIZES PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER AS "PRANCING AROUND EUROPE LIKE A PAIR OF 'SICK' COMEDIANS" BOASTING ABOUT THE "SHAMEFUL MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR"; EUROPEANS WHO ARE "NOT SICKENED BY THIS SPECTACLE...NEED TO HAVE THEIR HEADS EXAMINED." COLUMN SPEAKS OF "DARKNESS OF KISSINGER'S METTERNICH POLICY" AND "THE PAIR'S" VIRTUAL THREAT TO REST OF WORLD OF "TOTAL NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION IF IT AS MUCH AS COUGHS WITHOUT AMERICA'S SAY-SO...AMERICA IS NOT PHOENIX RISING FROM THE ASHES. IT IS A DRUNKEN JOHN WAYNE SHOOTING INDISCRIMINATELY AT INDIANS." NEITHER MEDIA HERE NOR ZAMBIA NEWS AGENCY (ZANA) HAVE CARRIED ANYTHING ABOUT PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S EUROPEAN TRIP ON WHICH SUCH COMMENTARY MIGHT, EVEN WITH EXTRAORDINARY STREATCH OF IMAGINATION AND PARTICULAR DISLIKE FOR US, CONCEIVABLY BE BASED.

2. SINCE TIMES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF IS GRZ APPOINTEE, WE BELIEVE WE HAVE BASIS ON WHICH TO MAKE STRONG HIGH LEVEL EXPRESSION TO GRZ OF OUR DEEP CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR US-ZAMBIAN RELATIONS.

3. ZAMBIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF US HAS LONG BEEN GROSSLY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LUSAKA 01009 040800Z

UNBALANCED, UNFAIR, AND OFTEN FOUNDED ON FICTION. (YOUR

MAY 19 LETTER TO PAO BURNS ON THIS GENERAL PROBLEM HAS JUST ARRIVED AS THIS MESSAGE BEING PREPARED.) TIMES JUNE 1 DIATRIBE, HOWEVER, IS HIGH POINT (SO FAR) IN CRESCENDO OF

MEDIA (ESPECIALLY TIMES) CASTIGATION OF US GOING BACK TO DAVIS APPOINTMENT AND CARRYING ON THROUGH KAUNDA VISIT, IMPASSE IN MIDEAST PEACE EFFORTS, INDO-CHINA DEBACLE, AND MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR (E.G., LUSAKA 0916, 0906, 0907, 0721, 0338). THOUGH TIMES IS STILL LONHRO CONTROLLED, PENDING COMPLETION NEGOTIATIONS WE UNDERSTAND GOING ON FOR GRZ OR UNIP PURCHASE OF PAPER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF IS KAUNDA APPOINTEE AND EDITORIAL POLICY AT LEAST FROM TIME TO TIME OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCED IF NOT DICTATED BY STATE HOUSE. HAVE LITTLE DOUBT JUNE 1 PIECE CAME FROM ACERBIC PEN OF DEPUTY EDITOR BILL SAIDI (WHO IS LIKELY FURIOUS OVER SUCCESSFUL RESCUE OF MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW). HE MAY HAVE WRITTEN THIS PARTICULAR COLUMN WITHOUT SPECIAL GUIDANCE. HOWEVER, FAILURE OF GRZ TO CURB THIS OR EARLIER MANIFESTATIONS SAIDI'S BLATANTLY AMERICAN COMMENTARIES MUST LEAD US TO ASSUME THESE ATTACKS ARE CONDONED IF NOT ENCOURAGED BY SENIOR ZAMBIAN OFFICIALS.

4. PREPARATORY TO HIGHER LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WHICH YOU MAY WISH HAVE ON THIS AND OTHER ASPECTS US-ZAMBIA RELATIONS WHEN YOU RETURN (AT WHICH TIME YOU WILL HAVE RESULTS OF MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH REQUESTED IN YOUR MAY 19 LETTER), I PROPOSE RAISE JUNE 1 EDITORIAL ORALLY WITH MIN STATE SILWIZYA IN COURSE OF OTHER BUSINESS WE HAVE TO TAKE UP. NEW FONMIN BANDA, AS YOU KNOW, STILL IN NEW YORK AND ACTING FONMIN IS CHIKWANDA, WHO NOT LIKELY BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL CHANNEL FOR EXPRESSION OUR CONCERN AND PRESENTLY VISITING DAR IN ANY EVENT. (PRESIDENT, INCIDENTALLY, HAS JUST TAKEN OFF FOR 3-WEEK WORKING HOLIDAY AT MFUWE.) BURNS WILL ALSO TAKE IT UP WITH EDITOR PUNABANTU, BUT AS YOU WELL AWARE FROM OUR PAST EXPERIENCE, THAT IS MOST LIKELY TO BE UNPRODUCTIVE.

5. WOULD PROPOSE TO SPEAK TO SILWIZYA ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: HESITATE TO RAISE MATTER PAINFUL TO US APPEARING IN ZAMBIA PRESS WHICH, AS IS PROPER, HAS DUTY TO EXPRESS OPINION AND PUBLISH NEWS FREELY. THE BITTER AND OUTRAGUOUSLY PERSONAL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LUSAKA 01009 040800Z

TIMES ATTACK ON THE LEADERS OF A FRIENDLY COUNTRY WHO HAVE JUST CORDIALLY RECEIVED PRESIDENT KAUNDA, HOWEVER, OBVIOUSLY CANNOT PASS UNNOTICED. POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR RELATIONS ARE MATTER OF DEEP CONCERN BECAUSE GRZ IS INEVITABLY ASSOCIATED IN SOME MEASURE WITH TIMES EDITORIAL POLICY SINCE THE EDITOR IS APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF. IF THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE WERE ISOLATED OCCURANCE, IT COULD PERHAPS BE VIEWED IN SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT LIGHT. UNFORTUNATELY,

THAT IS NOT THE CASE. IT IS LATEST AND, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE MOST OMINOUS IN A SERIES OF RECENT LOCAL PRESS ATTACKS OF GROWING INTENSITY--THE BASELESS "SNUB" EDITORIAL WHICH NEARLY CLOUDED THE KAUNDA VISIT, THE EQUIALLY BASELESS EDITORIAL FALSELY ASSERTING GHANA HEAD OF STATE HAD REFUSED TO RECEIVE ASST SECY DAVIS, AND SUBSEQUENT TIMES--AND MAIL, FOR THAT MATTER--FAILURE TO CORRECT SITUATION BY PUBLISHING ZANA REPORT DAVIS HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY HEADS OF STATE OF GHANA, LIBERIA, IVORY COAST, CAMEROON, GABON, AND UNBALANCED TREATMENT OF INDO-CHINA COLLAPSE AND MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR. ONE IS INESCAPABLY OBLIGED TO ASK WHETHER THIS EDITORIAL POLICY, AND MOST PARTICULARLY THE PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT OF THE US AND HIS SEC STATE, IN SOME MANNER REFLECTS THE VIEWS OF THE GRZ. IF NOT, WE HOPE WAYS CAN BE FOUND TO CORRECT ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS BOTH HERE AND IN THE US ABOUT THE STATE OF OUR RELATIONS.

6. IF YOU AGREE, I WOULD SUGGEST TO SILWIZYA I EXPECT YOU WILL WISH TO DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL UPON YOUR RETURN.

NELSON

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